

Philadelphia, PA Rewarding Youth Achievement Program

Profile of Partners: The Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board has contracted with the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) to manage direct delivery of services for RYA. The PYN is a 501(c)(3) that staffs the Youth Council, serves as an intermediary organization to support and sustain the efforts and partnerships created under Philadelphia's nationally recognized School-to-Career system and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth initiatives.

Area Served: The six RYA high schools are located in Philadelphia's three federally designated Empowerment Zones neighborhoods. The EZ poverty rate is 51%, more than double the citywide average. Eighty percent of EZ youth qualify for public assistance, while the dropout rate in the targeted high schools is more than three times the citywide average.

Profile of Participants/Outcomes: Less than 9% of the students in the RYA schools score at the proficient level in either math or reading.

Total number of students served: 408

Students returning to school: All 79 students enrolled in the summer program

Students enrolled in post-secondary: 27

Improved academics, especially in math and science: no data yet available

Success Stories: Philadelphia RYA is incorporating three unique programs into its system.

A. In the **Lockheed Registered Apprenticeship Program**, seven RYA students are participating in a pilot apprenticeship program at Lockheed Martin Management & Data Systems. RYA students earned these competitive slots after being coached and mentored by RYA Career Specialists and demonstrating significantly increased job readiness competencies. The first of its kind in the country, this registered apprenticeship program in information technology (IT) careers requires that students spend 8 hours/ week at Lockheed during the school year, and work 32 hours/ week during the summer, earning \$8 per hour. The three-year program will include more than 4,000 hours of high school and on-the-job education with core classes including math, communications, science, information technology, software and systems, engineering, and professional development. Lockheed Martin will offer full time employment to students/apprentices who successfully complete the program one year after graduation.

B. The **WaWa/ Cornell Program** is a regional project dedicated to assisting schools, businesses, and workers to strengthen the food industry. Philadelphia Youth Network, in partnership with WaWa, Inc., is currently recruiting RYA students for this opportunity. The two-year, year-round internship program requires students to commit to 20 hours per week to work at \$7/hour and independent study including self-paced distance learning and business management modules. Upon completion, the students can earn up to 6 transferable credits from Cornell University.

C. The **Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens Leadership Development** program is being used to instill positive attitudes and empower both the RYA students and staff. The RYA staff has been certified as Student Achievement Workshop facilitators, and use their skills to embed the 7 Habits philosophy into their curriculum, seminars, and interactions with students. When the goals of the RYA program are combined with the teachings of the 7 Habits RYA students are provided with the attitudes, skills, and experiences necessary to be resilient, adaptable, successful life-long learners and employees.

Profile of Services for Youth

Enriched Summer Experience: Through a partnership with Temple University, RYA students explored the concepts of physics and mechanical engineering in constructivist, project- based courses designed to address the science standards of the School District of Philadelphia, and attended weekly work readiness seminars. Other students worked for various employers 4 days a week, and attend weekly engineering and physics seminars at Temple University.

Math and Science Enhancement: Math and Science tutoring is provided after-school by teachers paid by RYA. See also Enriched Summer Experience above.

Year-Round Activities:

- **Mentoring:** Career Specialists, (located full-time at the high school), mentor RYA students, delivering weekly group seminars and individual coaching-advocacy sessions. Trained Job-Site Mentors support the students engaged in Work-Based Learning, and the Career Specialist acts as liaison.
- **Career Assessment:** Career Specialists facilitate weekly Work Readiness seminars in group and individual settings.
- **Tutoring:** Links are identified to existing academic support programs in the school or neighborhood. Tutors are provided as needed, determined by monitoring of grades.

College Bound Assistance: Each RYA student participates in various campus experiences, such as tours, career fairs, job shadowing. Financial aid seminars are delivered by PHEAA and connections to test preparatory courses are given by the College Access program. Assistance with essays, recommendations, and application processes is provided as well as on-going connecting, coaching and support from Career Specialists.

Roles of Partners:

Linkages to Existing Programs

- Employer-based Stakeholder Partnerships and Resource Boards, provide School-to-Career-related opportunities, including job shadowing, mock interviews, career fairs, and Work-Based Learning opportunities.
- GEAR UP has agreed to collaborate with RYA when the Gear-up students reach 11th grade. They are currently in 9th grade.
- **The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)**, a full-service financial aid organization that develops innovative ways to ease the financial burdens of students and borrowers, trained RYA Career Specialists on the web-based PHEAAmentor program, a free resource for college applications, financial aid information, and virtual campus tours, and is offering RYA on-going technical assistance.
- Career Specialists link RYA students to the **College Access Centers** - a program of the Philadelphia Education Fund created to help make college an achievable goal for local students. Resources such as guidance materials, college catalogs and videos, and space on college tours are shared with RYA
- The **National School and Community Corps** helps inform students in RYA schools about career options and educational support available. NSCC sponsored a portion of a Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens leadership development workshop.

- **Communities in Schools, Inc.** programs provide increased opportunities to students participating in the Education Leading to Employment and Career Training program (ELECT), a program geared toward pregnant and parenting youth.

Private/Public Sector Commitments

The private sector provides on-going support through the collaborative efforts of the Stakeholder Partnerships and Resource Boards, which are partnerships administered by Philadelphia Youth Network. Through these vehicles, the major employers of Philadelphia provide real-world experiences and support to RYA students. Some private sector employers are providing wages for Work-Based Learning students.

Post-secondary Commitments

Temple University, Metropolitan Career Center, and Drexel University provide rigorous summer experiences. Community College of Philadelphia offers opportunities for students to earn college credit, and to participate in campus based programs during the school year. Members of Cheyney University Alumni Association review and recommend RYA applications to that institution.

Key Elements to Success:

Career Specialists- Experienced youth development professionals are located in each RYA school to advocate, support and mentor the students through the program. The Career Specialist creates and delivers the workshops, chaperones career related activities outside of school, and provides supports for the student and the employer at the worksites.

Work-Based Learning- Through paid, supported experience in the world of work, WBL demonstrates the connection between the classroom and the work place. The supervisor is trained (when time permits) to act as a mentor at the work-site for the student. A learning plan is developed that provides a framework for student growth through clearly laid out student goals. The Career Specialist acts as the liaison between the employer and RYA student.

Curriculum- The experiential series of workshops, delivered during the school day, create a pathway to post secondary success by encouraging the student through self-exploration, goal-setting, and career and college exploration and are. RYA students also receive counseling in individual and small groups from the Career Specialist. RYA works with the school to provide increased opportunities for our students to receive additional academic credits for skills developed in the classroom, at the work-site, and during summer experiences.

Leadership Development- All RYA students are encouraged to participate in student achievement workshops based on the principles of “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens” book by Sean Covey. These workshops support the development of teamwork, winning attitudes and problem solving skills. During the workshops special emphasis is placed on personal leadership by exploring the first three habits, which are “be proactive”, “begin with the end in mind”, and put first things first.” The Career Specialists have been trained as facilitators of the “Seven Habit” process, and integrate the Covey principles into the RYA program.

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